

**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) announced today that the Appropriations Committee rejected his amendment to block funds for the controversial “Bridge to Nowhere” during the full committee mark up of the FY08 Transportation and HUD Appropriations bill. The amendment would prohibit federal funds for both the Bridge to Nowhere, which would connect the town of Ketchikan (population 8,900) to Gravina Island (population 50), as well as the Knik Arm Bridge, which would connect Anchorage to Port MacKenzie (a rural area that has a population of one – and north of the town Knik, which has a population of 22 people). The State of Alaska would still receive the transportation funds, but would be unable to use them for these specific projects.

“Congress cannot justify spending more than \$450 million in taxpayer funds on bridges that connect two communities with a combined population of less than 100,” Congressman Kirk said. “The per-person cost for both of these ‘Bridges to Nowhere’ is more than \$6 million. At a time when our national debt continues to spiral out of control, we need more fiscal responsibility from the Congress to safeguard taxpayers from wasteful pork spending.”

In the 109th Congress, the House passed H.R. 3, (SAFTEA-LU), which authorized \$223 million for the Bridge to Nowhere and \$231 million for the Knik Arm Bridge. The FY06 Transportation, Treasury and HUD Appropriations bill contained a provision to defund the earmarks. However, Alaska is still the recipient of the federal dollars and can allocate them as the state sees fit – including expenditures for the two projects. After Congress deleted earmarks for the bridges and the House opposed funding, work continues. Alaska has obligated \$36.3 million in federal funds to begin building the Knik Arm Crossing and \$26.7 million in federal funds to build the Bridge to Nowhere.

Congressman Kirk successfully attached the amendment to the FY07 Transportation, Treasury, HUD Appropriations bill, H.R. 5576, on June 6, 2006. However, the final bill never passed the House.

The amendment is supported by Citizens for Government Waste, National Taxpayers Union, Taxpayers for Common Sense and Americans for Prosperity.

## About the Bridge to Nowhere

- Links the town of Ketchikan (population 8,900) to Gravina Island (population 50)
- Originally estimated to cost \$230 million.
- The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities increased its cost estimates by 37 percent to \$315 million.
- The bridge would replace a \$6, fifteen-minute ferry ride with a structure nearly as long as the Golden Gate Bridge and 80 feet higher than the Brooklyn Bridge.
- If completed, the federal government’s share of the project would provide a \$40 per trip subsidy for users of the bridge. Boston’s Big Dig is only \$3 per trip subsidy.

### **About the Knik Arm Bridge**

- Connects Anchorage to Port MacKenzie (a rural area that has a population of one – and north of the town Knik, which has a population of 22 people).
- The Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority is completing the Environmental Impact Statement for the project. Key problems with construction include:
  - The bridge approach will cut through the Government Hill neighborhood, disrupting the historic district.
  - The construction, bridge length and narrow opening may harm the Cook Inlet beluga whales, recently proposed to be listed as endangered by NOAA.
  - These problems will likely increase costs above the original \$600 million estimate.